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BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

CHINA
XU Xiangqian
December 1979

(U) NAME: Xu Xiangqian (Hsu Hsiang-chien) (1776/0686/0467) (pronounced shoo), Army. Xu was a Marshal when ranks were abolished in 1965.

(U) POSITION: Vice Chairman, Military Commission, since 1966; Minister of National Defense, since March 1978; Vice Premier of the State Council, since March 1978; Member, Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCP/CC), since 1945; Member, Politburo, CCP/CC since August 1977.



~~(C)~~ SIGNIFICANCE: The Military Commission is charged with the formulation and implementation of China's national defense policies. (U) 1977
As a vice chairman, Xu can exert strong influence over the pace and scope of military modernization. In his position as Minister of National Defense, Xu is considered the spokesman for China's military establishment. He oversees administrative functions for the Military Commission, including such programs as recruitment and civil defense. Xu may also serve as an intermediary between the Military Commission and the State Council in such matters as establishing requirements for the National Defense Science and Technology Commission and drawing up the military budget.

~~(C)~~ Articles by Xu, which appear in official Chinese media, are believed to accurately reflect Beijing's policies on military development. In a recent article, Xu linked the development of national defense to success in economic modernization; placed primary emphasis on the development of conventional weapons; underscored deficiencies in command and combat capability; and called for the intensive study of modern warfare.

(U) POLITICS: Xu is one of China's veteran military leaders, having served as a major military commander since the founding of the Chinese Communist Army. His continual service as an upper echelon military leader has enabled him to form associations with the vast majority of national level military and civilian leaders as well as all of the current military region commanders. He was considered to be a brilliant general during the formative years of the Red Army. Xu's career has been quite controversial and he has suffered some setbacks, mainly because of errors in following the correct military line. Prior to his appointment as Minister of National Defense, Xu did little more than handle protocol functions.

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(U) PERSONAL DATA: Xu was born in 1902, in Shanxi Province. His father was a classical scholar, a school teacher, and a small landlord. Xu married in the early 1920s but left his wife and one daughter to attend school in Guangzhou. His wife died shortly thereafter and he lost track of the child. Xu is a slender man, about 173 cm (5'8") in height. He was awarded the Order of August First, the Order of Independence and Freedom, and the Order of Liberation, all First Class and all bestowed September 1955.

(U) CAREER:

- 1925-1934 - Graduated from Whampoa Military Academy in 1925; served in the Kuomintang in Shandong and Henan Provinces. In 1926, appointed an instructor at the Central Military and Political Academy, a branch of the Whampoa Academy, in Wuhan. Joined the Chinese Communist Party. With about 1,200 others, escaped from Guangzhou following the revolt against the Nationalists; established the 4th Division of the Workers' and Peasants' Red Army and served as Chief of Staff. Deputy Commander, 31st Division, 11th Red Army, 1928; redesignated the 1st Red Army in 1930 with Xu's forces designated the 1st Division. Renamed the 4th Front Army in 1931, Xu as Commander. Pressure from Nationalist Army in Hubei forced march into Sichuan Province.
- 1935-1949 - Xu's army joined Mao Zedong's when the latter marched through Sichuan during the Long March. After a bitter policy conflict, Xu and the 4th Front Army left the main forces. Following several defeats, eventually escaped to Mao's base in Shaanxi, 1936. Was demoted to Deputy Commander, 129th Division, 8th Route Army, under the leadership of Liu Bochong and Deng Xiaoping. At the same time received command of the 385th Brigade. Received command of South Hebei Military District. Transferred to Shandong to form new guerrilla forces (known as the 1st Column), 1930. Illness forced him to retire from active field command in 1941 and return to Yenan to recuperate. In Yenan, elected to the Central Committee in 1945, a post he has held to the present. May also have been President, Resistance Military and Political University at the end of the Sino-Japanese War. In 1947, succeeded Liu Bochong as Commander, Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan Military District. Late in 1948,

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Xu's forces were placed under Nie Rongzhen and he became Commander and Political Commissar, 1st Army Group. Xu's forces occupied Taiyuan and he became Chairman, Taiyuan Municipal Military Control Commission. Concurrently, promoted to Deputy Commander, North China Military District and appointed a member of the North China People's Government Council.

- 1950-1954 - After 1949, promoted to Chief of General Staff, People's Liberation Army. Evidence suggests that ill health prevented active participation in military and government over next few years. Nie Rongzhen acted as Chief of Staff during this time. Elected to the Standing Committee, 1st National People's Congress in 1954 and appointed a vice chairman. Removed from position as Chief of Staff.
- 1955 - Ranks initiated and Xu named one of 10 Marshals.
- 1956-1969 - Re-elected to the Central Committee in 1956, and to the Standing Committee of the 2nd National People's Congress in 1959. Identified as a member of the Military Commission in 1961 and a vice chairman in 1966. In 1965, elected a vice chairman, Standing Committee, National People's Congress. Appointed Head, People's Liberation Army Cultural Revolution Group, and Member, Politburo, 1967. Removed from post as Head of Cultural Revolution Group after Red Guards attacked him for differences with Lin Biao, April 1967. Removed from Politburo, April 1969.
- 1970-1975 - Inactive from 1969 until 1972. Performed protocol tasks. Led a goodwill delegation to Albania in July 1973. Re-elected Member 10th CCP/CC, August 1973. Also re-elected Vice Chairman, National People's Congress Standing Committee, January, 1975.
- 1977-Present - Re-elected to Politburo at 11th CCP/CC, August 1977. Elected Defense Minister and Vice Premier of the State Council at 5th National People's Congress, March 1978.

PREPARED BY: [REDACTED] DIA/DB-2B4

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